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Mr C Stone
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Stone

Ofsted survey inspection programme – art & design

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 and 4 December 2007 to look at work in art and design.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with teachers and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of art and design was judged to be good with outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in art and design are good, and in some respects outstanding.

- Pupils enjoy the subject and show pride in their sketchbooks and coursework. They co-operate well, sharing materials and equipment.
- Standards and achievement are good in Key Stage 3. Pupils develop good skills across a range of two- and three-dimensional media. They demonstrate understanding about key concepts such as line, tone, colour and form. However, pupils in Years 7 and 8 are able to share limited evidence of their ability to handle large scale.
- In Key Stage 4 the pupils who choose to take the examination course make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Pupils achieve results at GCSE which are well above national averages; those of lower and average ability achieve particularly well. The progress and achievement

of boys has improved significantly in the subject, and is now well above national averages.

- The range and quality of coursework is good, and shows inventive use of materials and techniques with some outstanding work where art media is used to express a personal response.
- Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively for graphic projects and image manipulation. The use of ICT motivates and sustains the interest of boys and girls.
- The quality of pupils' research into relevant themes and wide ranging artists is good and supports their learning well.
- Students taking the AS and A level courses make good progress. Results have improved in recent years and are well above national averages.
- Sixth-form students make good progress in the development of a range of art skills, including drawing, painting and visual research. They are able to explore a range of art techniques and identify and use those that best suit their own projects. They make inventive use of artistic references in their own work.
- Students know about the work of a number of contemporary artists, including some artists whose work presents challenges to conventional views of art. The most able can articulate ideas which connect art with social, moral, spiritual and cultural concepts. Others are less confident about engaging fully with more challenging art work, and their skills of analysis and debate are less well developed.

Quality of teaching and learning of subject

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Art and design lessons are well planned, define learning objectives clearly and are generally matched to pupils' needs, interests and abilities. However, the use of identifiable outcomes for "all" "some" and "few" does not help to improve teachers' planning for, and assessment of, creativity.
- Activities are well organised and pupils are well managed but the most effective teaching makes additional use of different strategies to check the understanding of different pupils and drive the pace of learning.
- Teachers encourage pupils to devise personal and individual responses, evaluate and identify ways to improve their own work. They support pupils effectively in developing their own ideas and plans.
- Teachers lead oral assessment sessions positively and skilfully, giving accurate judgements whilst valuing pupils' self-evaluation. Their approach encourages pupils to give of their best.
- The department use risk assessment procedures appropriately. Lively displays of work contribute to a satisfactory learning environment whilst the department is housed in temporary accommodation.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The requirements of the National Curriculum, GCSE, AS and A level examinations are met. The school is working to extend the curriculum by working with local schools and colleges to develop the new Creative and Media Diploma.
- The art curriculum ensures that subject knowledge, skills and understanding are developed systematically but more could be done to identify opportunities for pupils to make progress in their creative development. In the sixth form there are too few opportunities for students to build the confidence to express personal insights into the subject.
- Topics are interpreted in ways that enable pupils to use a wide variety of media and techniques, particularly through their visual research and experimentation. By Year 9 pupils encounter themes and complete critical studies relevant to social, moral and ethical issues such as recycling.

Leadership and management of subject

The leadership and management of art are outstanding.

- The department is led skilfully; the head of department works hard to ensure that staff are fully involved in the development of the subject. Teachers work effectively as a team and have made significant progress in a short time. Their capacity to develop further is excellent.
- Priorities for improvement are accurately identified and rigorously addressed. For example, the underachievement of boys in relation to that of girls has been pursued across the department to good effect. This has been achieved by focusing on topics which interest boys, providing appealing resources including ICT and by giving value to their work by celebrating individual achievements.
- The school has high and clearly articulated expectations of the department, and these are met very successfully. The "can do" approach fits well with the school's positive ethos.

Subject Issue: The contribution of assessment to pupils' progress and creativity

- The department use National Curriculum levels accurately to make interim and summary judgements on pupils' achievement and standards. Pupils taking examinations are given clear guidance about assessment objectives and are made very clear about what they need to do to achieve their target grade.
- Pupils' creativity is promoted through discussion between teachers and pupils within individual coursework.

Inclusion:

- The department makes good and effective provision for different pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers motivate pupils well by tailoring projects and units of work to interest them, and by ensuring that support is available to help them realise

their plans. The improved performance of boys is evidence of their effectiveness.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- make the assessment of creativity more explicit
- develop the confidence of sixth formers to participate fully in discussion.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop Art in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your Local Authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Jones
Additional Inspector